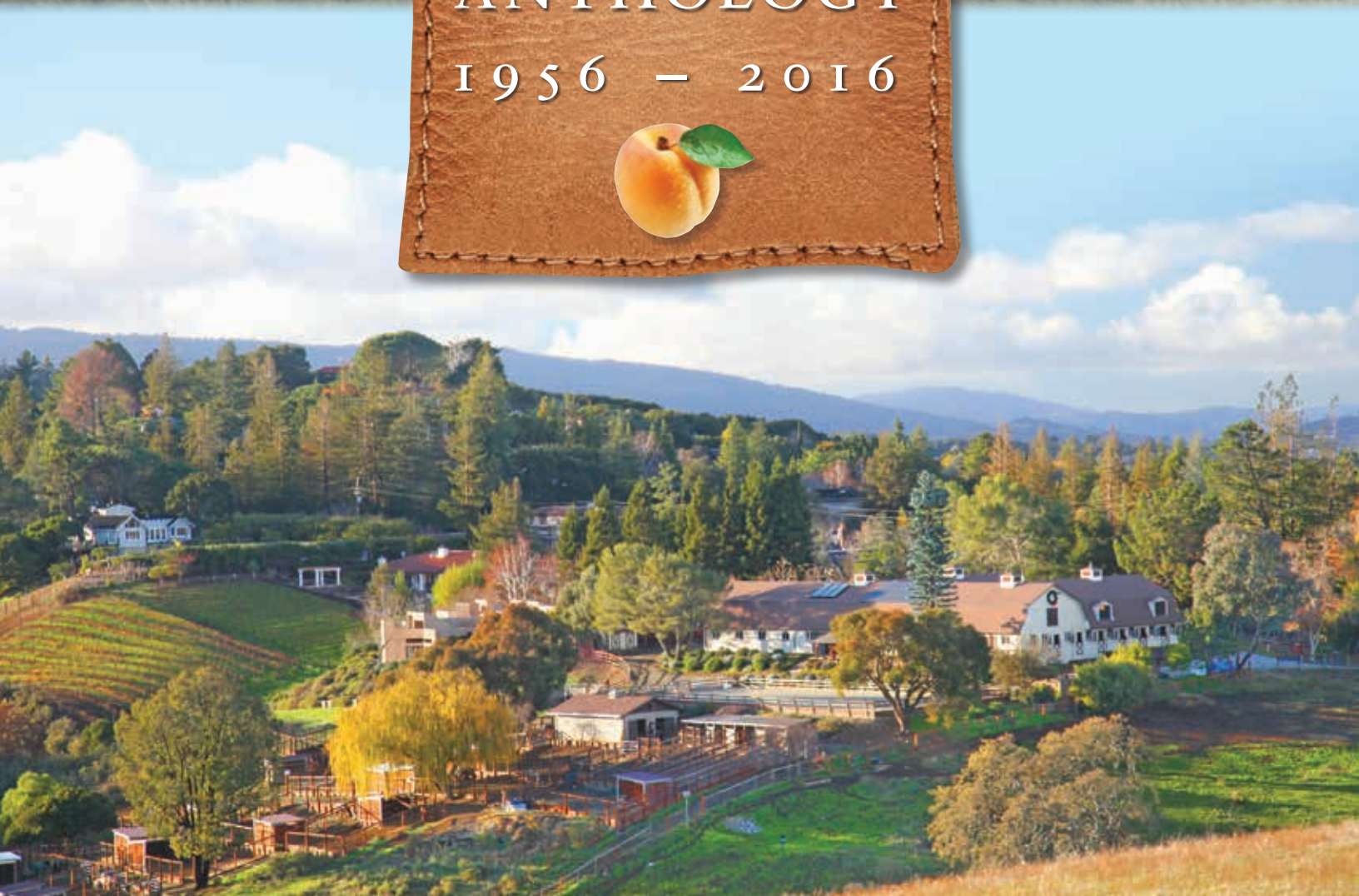
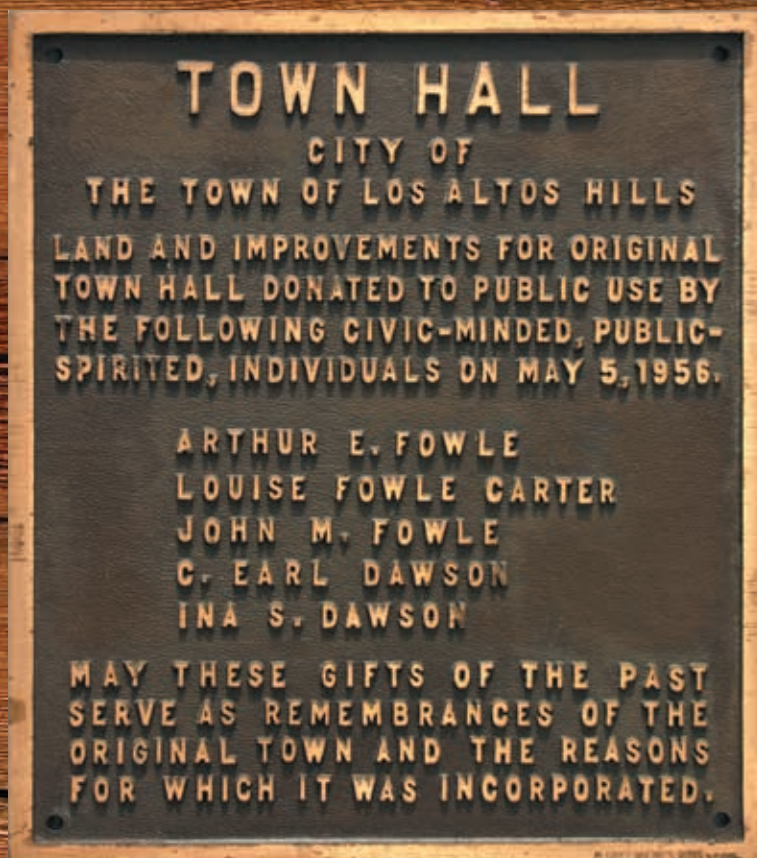


LOS ALTOS HILLS  
**HISTORY**  
ANTHOLOGY  
1956 — 2016





# Our Heritage

To paraphrase Robert Kennedy, few will have the greatness to bend history itself; but each of us can work to change a small portion of events, and in the total, of all those acts will be written the history of our town. This anthology weaves together a colorful, historical tapestry to celebrate the 60th anniversary of Los Altos Hills. Stories and images recount the experience of everyday people, farmers, writers, entrepreneurs, innovators, and philanthropists whose lives have influenced the character of our town. From decade to decade, residents exhibit a spirit of independence, an appreciation for nature and wildlife, a high regard for quality public education, and a deep commitment to volunteerism and community service. Taken together, these values form our heritage. This heritage can be a source of pride, yet it is fragile — always on the brink of being compromised or lost. The goal of this anthology is to inspire an appreciation of our past and encourage participation in the small events that make our town unique.

ALEXANDER ATKINS  
*Editor and Designer*

*Ruth McMahon  
and her horse  
Poncho went door  
to door “aback” to  
obtain signatures  
for the petition to  
incorporate.*



# God's Little Acre



The bucolic little hillside town that started 60 years ago as a few hundred redwood ranch homes with roses around the door, averaging about 3,000-square-feet in floor area, is today dotted with far more majestic residences, with floor plans up to 20,000-square-feet or even greater. Wealth, the reward of the energy of brilliant entrepreneurs and gifted technical minds, has arrived.

The founders of the town expressed their dream of a quiet bucolic community, free from the constraints of county government, in two key founding documents: the so-called “Green Sheets” and the “Platform for Incorporation.” It was acclaimed writer and Stanford professor Wallace Stegner who dubbed the town “God’s Little Acre.” Members of the founding committee, including representatives from six neighborhoods, along with Stegner and other key residents helped lead a few hundred residents to vote the town into existence. The early days of the town, were characterized by the utmost simplicity in government, minimum bureaucracy and many, many horses. The residents went happily about their daily round, content in the achievement of their dream.

But time did not stand still, and in adjacent Silicon Valley, a technical revolution that was to affect deeply the town as well as the entire world, was taking place. Fortunes were being made on an unimaginable scale, and the new captains of industry were searching for somewhere to plant their roots in settings of quiet and beauty. The Town of Los Altos Hills, with its seductive rural countenance, beckoned.

Alarmed longtime residents, mindful of the promise of the founding documents saw the invading bulldozers and graders as evidence of visitation by others with



no regard for the sanctity of the unique environment, and thus protested. But as time went by, it became clear that many of the invaders were going to extraordinary lengths to build in harmony with their surroundings, and reaching out to recognize the concerns of their new neighbors. As in every community, there were a few with poor aesthetic taste or even disregard for others, but the new generation, with its optimistic take on human affairs, seems eager to maintain, in its own special way, the early objectives of the founders.

And just how successful are they in this endeavor? The Green Sheets called for the area to “remain residential, quiet, and reasonably rural... We want to walk around our house without knocking our heads on our neighbor’s eaves... We want roads that are content to remain country lanes... [We] want at least one acre of land.”

It would be hard to deny that these desirable characteristics endure today. And there are still no sidewalks, no streetlights; the town’s police and fire protection services are borrowed from outside. The new Town Hall is a model of sensitive rural design and environmental respect. Sixty years after the founding of the town, despite many changes and growth, residents can be grateful that “God’s Little Acre” has been preserved.

*Bob Johnson is a former Los Altos Hills mayor and councilmember.*

# Timeline

- 1776** The Declaration of Independence was signed  
Lt. Colonel Juan Bautista de Anza expedition traveled through Santa Clara Valley
- 1777** Pueblo San Jose became first civil settlement in Alta California  
Santa Clara Mission was founded
- 1822** California became a province of Mexico
- 1833** Secularization Law turned over all mission properties to civil authorities
- 1834** Land grant of 4,436 acres was given to Ohlone father and son Jose Gorgonio and Jose Ramon
- 1839** Land grant of 4,438 acres was awarded to Don Juan Prado Mesa
- 1840** Gorgonio land grant was formally signed by Governor Juan B. Alvarado
- 1844** Juana Briones de Miranda purchased Gorgonio land and named it Rancho La Purísima Concepción
- 1845** Juan Prado Mesa died
- 1846** Mexican-American War; United States claimed California
- 1848** The California Gold Rush began when gold was found at Sutter's Mill in Coloma
- 1850** California became a state
- 1857** Juana Briones de Miranda sold 3,000 acres of Rancho la Purisima Concepcion to Martin Murphy, Jr.
- 1887** Otto Arnold purchased 600 acres of Hidden Villa
- 1889** Juana Briones died
- 1901** The Purissima School District was formed  
The single-building Purissima Schoolhouse, with one room, was built on two acres of Taaffe land  
Griffin House was built for Willard Griffin, a founder of Del Monte Packing Company.
- 1916** Lantarnam Hall, later called Morgan Manor, was built by Percy Morgan Jr.
- 1918** School was delayed a week "on account of the prune crop not being all gathered"
- 1924** Frank and Josephine Duveneck purchased Hidden Villa
- 1925** A resolution was passed by the Purissima School Board allowing the teacher to retain her job upon marriage
- 1936** Children's "interracial" camp established at Hidden Villa
- 1937** First Youth Hostel in California built at Hidden Villa
- 1944** Henry Waxman purchased Adobe Creek Lodge
- 1952** John Carter Ford moved the Ford Country Day School, a private K-6 school, from Los Altos to Morgan Manor
- 1955** Purissima Hills Water District was incorporated

- 1956** The Town of Los Altos Hills was incorporated  
The Palo Alto Unified School District (PAUSD) purchased land at 26800 Fremont Road to build and open Fremont Hills Elementary School
- 1957** The Foothill Community College District was formed
- 1958** Alan Cranston was elected state controller
- 1960** David Bellucci Sr. bought Adobe Creek Lodge on Moody Road and converted it into a private country club  
The Los Altos School District (LASD) purchased land near Elena Road to build and open Purissima Hills School  
LASD built and opened Eastbrook Elementary School on 11311 Mora Drive to serve the south part of town
- 1961** The First Master Path Plan was adopted  
Foothill College opened
- 1962** Committee for Green Foothills was founded  
West Fremont K-6 School, managed by LASD, opens on 25890 Fremont Road; the school is soon renamed Bullis School to honor Gardner Bullis, one of the leading proponents of the town's incorporation
- 1963** Committee for Green Foothills was founded
- 1966** Mary Davey is the first woman elected to town council  
Purissima Schoolhouse purchased for \$24,000 by the Episcopal Layman's group of Los Altos and restored as the Little Chapel in the Hills
- 1967** Dr. Albert Barnitz Byrne donated the 55-acre parcel of Byrne land off Altamont Road to Nature Conservancy  
Interstate 280 completed up to Page Mill Road
- 1968** Town of Los Altos Hills purchased the 55-acre Byrne Park Preserve from Nature Conservancy as permanent open space  
Alan Cranston won first term as California Senator
- 1971** An Ohlone village site was unearthed near El Monte and Summerhill Avenues  
The town council agreed to lease/purchase the Little League Fields (7.5 acres) from PAUSD
- 1972** The Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District was created
- 1975** Griffin House was placed on the National Register of Historic Places  
Countess Margit Besseney donated Westwind Barn to the Town





- 1976** Florence Fava published her history of the Town: *Los Altos Hills: The Colorful Story*  
Anza Corner was dedicated by Mayor Robert C. Cheney  
Purissima Hills School closed; Bullis School was renamed Bullis-Purissima School  
Fremont Hills Elementary School closed
- 1977** Josephine and Frank Duveneck donated 430 acres of Hidden Villa Ranch to the Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District  
PAUSD leases the 5-acre Fremont Hills Elementary School site to Pinewood School, a private school
- 1978** Eastbrook Elementary School closed; the land is sold to developers  
The 4-H Therapeutic Horseriding Program for Physically Handicapped Children was established at Westwind Barn
- 1981** The Town celebrated its 25th Anniversary  
The Master Path Plan was revised
- 1985** An arsonist set fire to a dry grass field along Arastradero Road that scorched 150 acres and destroyed 10 homes on Liddicoat Lane
- 1988** Ford Country Day School closed; the property now known as Stonebrook Court is sold to a private party
- 1989** Loma Prieta earthquake caused millions of dollars of damages to homes
- 1996** Developer John Vidovich received approval to build Quarry Hills, the last large subdivision to be built in the Hills
- 2000** Town of Los Altos Hills Recreation Program established at Westwind Barn
- 2002** Town Council agreed to accept provisions of the residents' "Open Space Initiative"  
Los Altos Hills City Clerk Patricia Dowd retired after 23 years of service  
The historic Winbigler house is demolished without town approval
- 2003** Bullis-Purissima School closed
- 2004** Bullis Charter School opened in portables located at Egan Junior High School in Los Altos  
From 2004 to 2008, Los Altos Hills did not have any public schools within the town's borders  
The old Town Hall was demolished in July
- 2005** The Master Path Plan (major portions) was revised  
New Town Hall opened in May

- 2006** The Town celebrated its 50th Anniversary
- 2007** The Town annexed 62 parcels in the West Loyola area  
Foothill College opened new campus center, student services building, life sciences building, and theatre
- 2008** Gardner Bullis Elementary School was opened after \$11 million renovation  
Voters passed a \$378 million bond to address enrollment growth and improvements to Gunn High School  
Westwind Barn came under Town management  
Town began extensive renovations to Westwind Barn and Purissima Park  
The Los Altos Hills County Fire District began offering free Personal Emergency Preparedness classes  
Residents collaborated with Town staff and a number of agencies to restore Adobe Creek to prevent bank erosion and flooding
- 2009** Renovated Purissima Park opened
- 2010** Renovated Westwind Barn opened  
Community Donor Wall was completed  
In response to severe drought, Town adopted a Water Efficient Landscape ordinance  
PG&E installed SmartMeters in all homes
- 2011** Town worked with wireless companies to install cell towers near Town Hall and Westwind Barn  
A Russian billionaire investor purchased a 17-acre, 25,500-square-foot French-style chateau for \$100 million  
Karen Jost retired after working for Town as Assistant to the City Engineer and Office Manager (1990-1993) and City Clerk (2002-2011)
- 2012** Town began the Fremont Road Safe Route to School project that is completed in one year  
Town annexed 50 parcels located on La Loma, Olive Tree, and Mora Drive  
As a result of the drought and disease, thousands of evergreen and oak trees died all around town
- 2013** The Public Art Committee was formed to accept and place donated sculptures around town  
Foothill College opened new physical sciences and engineering center
- 2014** Voters passed \$150 million bond measure to address enrollment growth and a final school site for Bullis Charter School
- 2015** The average listing price for a home in town reached \$4.05 million  
Jeanne Evilsizer retired after working for Town for 39 years (Assistant to City Engineer, Assistant to Planning Department, Building Technician); Bill Carino retired after working for Town for 27 years as Building Official  
Foothill College began \$10.5 million renovation of campus library and a 50,000-square-foot education facility in Sunnyvale  
Foothill College offered a bachelor's degree in dental hygiene





# First Families

The story of the first families to settle in Los Altos Hills begins with Martin and Mary Murphy's quest for religious and educational freedom which leads the Catholic-Irish immigrants to Mexican California six years before the Gold Rush, where they rise from humble farmers to influential figures during California's formative period. Much of the state's commerce, agriculture and education start on their Santa Clara Valley ranch that encompasses Los Altos Hills.

## A Family of Pioneers

The Murphy family's California legacy begins in 1844 when the pioneers establish the first wagon route to California over the Sierra Nevada Mountains, opening the California Trail for thousands of other immigrants. Although this route is now called Donner Pass, it was the Murphy-Townsend-Stephens Party who pioneered this crossing.

The Murphy's eldest daughter, Elizabeth "Lizzie" Yuba Murphy-Taaffe, who later receives Los Altos Hills as a wedding present from her parents, is born near the summit of the Sierra Nevada Mountains during the trek, earning her the distinction of being the first American child born in California, according to California





# MURPHY FIRSTS

- Members of the first pioneer wagon train to cross over the summit of the Sierra Nevada Mountains
- First child born of English-speaking immigrants in California
- First overt act against the Mexican government during the Bear Flag Revolt occurred on the Murphy's property in Sonoma
- Planted first wheat orchards in the Sacramento Valley
- Helped establish the first schools of higher education: The couple gave the money and land needed to open Santa Clara College and The College of Notre Dame.
- First to import American cattle and Norman horses to California
- First to import farm machinery from the East via Panama to use in the Santa Clara Valley
- First English-speaking family to settle in Santa Clara Valley
- Built first wood frame house in Santa Clara Valley: Martin had the home prefabricated, disassembled, and shipped around the Horn to Bay View Ranch.
- Planted the first orchards in Santa Clara Valley
- Built the first brick building in San Jose
- First Supreme Court of California convened at Murphy's Bay View Ranch in Sunnyvale
- The family is credited with founding the cities of Los Altos Hills, Sunnyvale, Murphys, Morgan Hill, Milpitas and San Martin
- Local streets in Sunnyvale and Los Altos Hills that bear family names, include: Mary, Mathilda, Bernardo, Frances, Martin, Taaffe, and Murphy avenues, Yuba Drive, Elsie Way, Taaffe and Elena roads and Via Arline.



folklore. She is born in the same cabin that the ill-fated Donner Party uses two years later during their journey west.

Once in California, the family experiences tremendous success: The Bear Flag Revolt that helps the United States gain control of California takes

**Mrs. Martin Murphy's good sense and knowledge beat all the lawyers and judges and legal appliances known to the practice of the law to clear (Murphy's) ranch of squatters. She secured by kindness what the iron hand of the law was trying to achieve.**

JUDGE C.T. RYLAND, 1881

place on their Sonoma property; Martin and Mary help establish the first schools, including Santa Clara University; and operate the first successful wheat ranch in the state. Some family members become state senators. Others end up owning some of the most successful gold mines in the state.

Collectively, the family becomes the largest private landowners in world. Before his death 40 years later, Martin owns 10 million acres in California, making it possible to travel from Sacramento to San Luis Obispo without leaving his property. When Martin's widow Mary dies in 1892, her share of the estate alone is worth \$5 million.

## **Better Than Gold: Bay View Ranch (1849-1863)**

Martin and Mary settle in Santa Clara Valley during the Gold Rush after Martin discovers the area during a business trip to purchase cattle that he plans to sell to miners in the gold fields near his Sacramento ranch.

*Left: Valley Destination: Bay View home becomes the valley's social, political and religious center during the Gold Rush. This shows Martin and Mary (center) with the Taaffe grandchildren at Bay View circa 1876. Mary and Mathilda are on the right, holding a jump rope on each side of the baby carriage, and Martin and William are standing on the far left. Lower right: Elizabeth "Lizzie" Yuba Murphy-Taaffe.*

His plans change when he sees the Valley with its rolling hills, oak orchards and open fields along the San Francisco Bay. He uses the cash he's carrying to purchase the 4,800-acre Rancho Pastoria de las Borregas (Sunnyvale). This property becomes his permanent home and the headquarters for his vast wheat ranching operations.

Here, he establishes Bay View Ranch, builds California's first wood-frame house and plants the Valley's first orchards.

In 1855, he expands Bay View to include the 3,000 acres of adjacent grazing pastures he had been leasing called Rancho La Purisima Concepcion (Los Altos Hills). He pays Juana Briones \$7,000 (or about (\$2.33 per acre) for the land. Denied a formal education and the ability to write, Murphy seals the deal with his customary "X" on the land deed.

Bay View becomes the Valley's political, social and religious center during the Gold Rush. California's first Supreme Court is established at the home, and San Francisco's first Archbishop Joseph Alemany performs marriage ceremonies and other religious

services there. In 1881, the home becomes the site of California's largest celebration at the time when the Murphys publish an open invitation for their golden wedding anniversary in newspapers statewide. More than 7,000 guests attend the three-day event.

#### **A \$14 Billion Wedding Present: Taaffe Ranch (1863-1875)**

In 1863, Martin and Mary give 2,800 acres of the Rancho La Purisima Concepcion (Los Altos Hills) portion of their ranch to their daughter Elizabeth Yuba as a wedding present when she marries San Francisco dry goods merchant William Post Taaffe. The couple builds a home on the site where Foothill College is located today, and the property becomes Taaffe Ranch.

According to family folklore, Murphy considers this property less desirable for his wheat operations than the rest of his Bay View ranch. He possibly gives this land to Elizabeth knowing that William is a merchant and won't likely use the property for commercial ranching. This "less desirable" land is worth about \$14 billion today, based on 2015 median property values in the 2,800-acre tract.

William expands his San Francisco dry goods business to San Jose, but the couple does not live on the ranch for long. Less than five years after their marriage, both die a few years apart from illnesses, leaving Mary and Martin Murphy to raise their four children, William, Martin and twins Mary and Mathilda.

**It became strenuous exercise getting off Rose Hill to the school room. There were horses to ride, but they had to be caught first, and that wasn't always easy.**

BESSIE TAAFFE, CIRCA 1902





### **Inheritance: Taaffe Ranch (1880-1930s)**

The four Taaffe children inherit equal shares of Taaffe Ranch, which evolves from rolling pastures to a stock and grain ranch. This generation, however, does not share the same success as their grandparents, and life on the ranch is marked with hardships and tragedy.

William "Will" Taaffe becomes one of the most extensive farmers in Santa Clara Valley after graduating from Santa Clara College in 1884. He supervises operations at his grandparents' 4,800-acre ranch and manages the entire 3,000-acre Taaffe Ranch until his younger brother finishes school. He and his wife, Mary Dunne, build a country home on his portion of the ranch (near today's Purissima Road) called Oakdale Villa. By 1897, Will is divorced and he has lost much of his money to his uncle's San Jose Commercial and Savings Bank that failed during the Panic of 1893. He loses his ranch property in a foreclosure suit. He continues to operate his other ranch in San Luis Obispo and serves as deputy city treasurer in San Jose until a crippling illness confines him to his home. He dies in 1905.

Twin sisters Mary (Mollie) and Mathilda (Mattie) are the youngest of the Taaffe children, born in the house their parents built on the ranch. Their story is the most tragic of the four siblings. Shortly after both of their brothers die, the unmarried twins are deemed incompetent for mismanaging their finances and institutionalized in separate



**There seemed to be a very close relationship between my twin aunts and my father because he always seemed so happy after a visit to their home in spite of all my pranks. Sliding down the banisters from the attic did not seem to be too awful even though quite risky.**

BESSIE TAAFFE

insane asylums, where they spend the rest of their lives and die virtually anonymous inmates. An appointed guardian liquidates the twins' massive land holdings inherited from their grandparents, which included a portion of Taaffe Ranch, Asuncion Ranch and a portion of Sunnyvale.

Martin Joseph Taaffe is the only sibling who makes the ranch his permanent home.

### **A Stock and Grain Ranch: Rose Hill (1888-1930s)**

Martin Taaffe calls his 1,100-acre tract of land Rose Hill after his bride Rose Hoffman, who is the niece of General Jose Castro, former governor of Mexican California. He builds a 12-room home at the top of today's Taaffe Road. From 1887 to 1901, he operates a stock and grain ranch there. The Hills' microclimate create conditions perfect for growing a special kind of hay for racehorses in San Mateo.

Life on the ranch appears to be idyllic for the couple and their five children in the early years until Martin experiences a series of hardships beginning in 1894, when an engine used to pump well water explodes and sears Martin's lungs. Rose pulls him from the explosion and saves his life, but his health is permanently impacted.

Martin's father-in-law Charlie Hoffman convinces Martin that Mexico's warm climate will help his condition and brings him to work on



Top: William and his sister Elena prepare to pick fruit on Rose Hill sometime after 1910. Right: The four Taaffe daughters from left are: Marie, Elena, Elizabeth (Bessie) and Martina (front), who was named after her father when the couple gives up all hope on ever having a son. They also had two sons, Martin and William Charles.

*Left: Martin Joseph and Rose. Right: Martin J. Taaffe II. Lower right: Members of the Taaffe and Hoffman families shown in front of a typical rustic summer house (circa 1890).*

his coffee plantation. Martin's condition only worsens and he returns home two years later in 1900 unable to work the ranch. To make matters worse, an unprecedented rain on the Fourth of July, ruins the wheat that was cut and drying in the fields. Two weeks later, some hunting ammunition ignites, catching the family home on fire. The home is saved, but other ranch buildings are lost. During the same time period,

business plummets after the 1906 Earthquake, which unnerved many potential clients. Rose packs her bags and moves to Texas to be closer to her parents who live across the border in Mexico where they own silver mines.

### **Bittersweet Homecoming**

Rose returns to Rose Hill sometime after 1916 with her sons Martin and Charles. With the main house still badly damaged from the 1906 Earthquake, the family takes up residence in one of the smaller worker cottages on the property.



him as an heir to his estate. Rose, who had never filed Martin's will, inherits the forgotten money, but it is too late to protect Rose Hill from foreclosure.

### **From Ranching to Construction**

After the family loses Rose Hill, Martin Jr. purchases 11 acres of property that once belonged to his uncle Will on Purissima Road, and establishes M.J. Taaffe Company. The construction company becomes one of two commercial businesses in Los Altos Hills history to be permitted to operate in the residential-only town. Adobe Creek Lodge is the other business.

Town founders allow the family business, which is passed down to his children Arline, Marty and Jim, to continue indefinitely. Much of the area's roads and driveways are built and maintained by M.J. Taaffe Co., including the Town Hall, Little League Fields, Los Altos parking alleys and Covington Pool.

After operating for more than six decades, M.J. Taaffe Co. shuts down in the early 1990s. Marty's son Ben starts the next generation of the business under the name M.B. Taaffe Co., which is still in operation.

*Linda Taaffe is the great-great-granddaughter of Martin Murphy Jr. and the daughter of James Taaffe. Information for this article was taken from family and state records and other published historical accounts.*

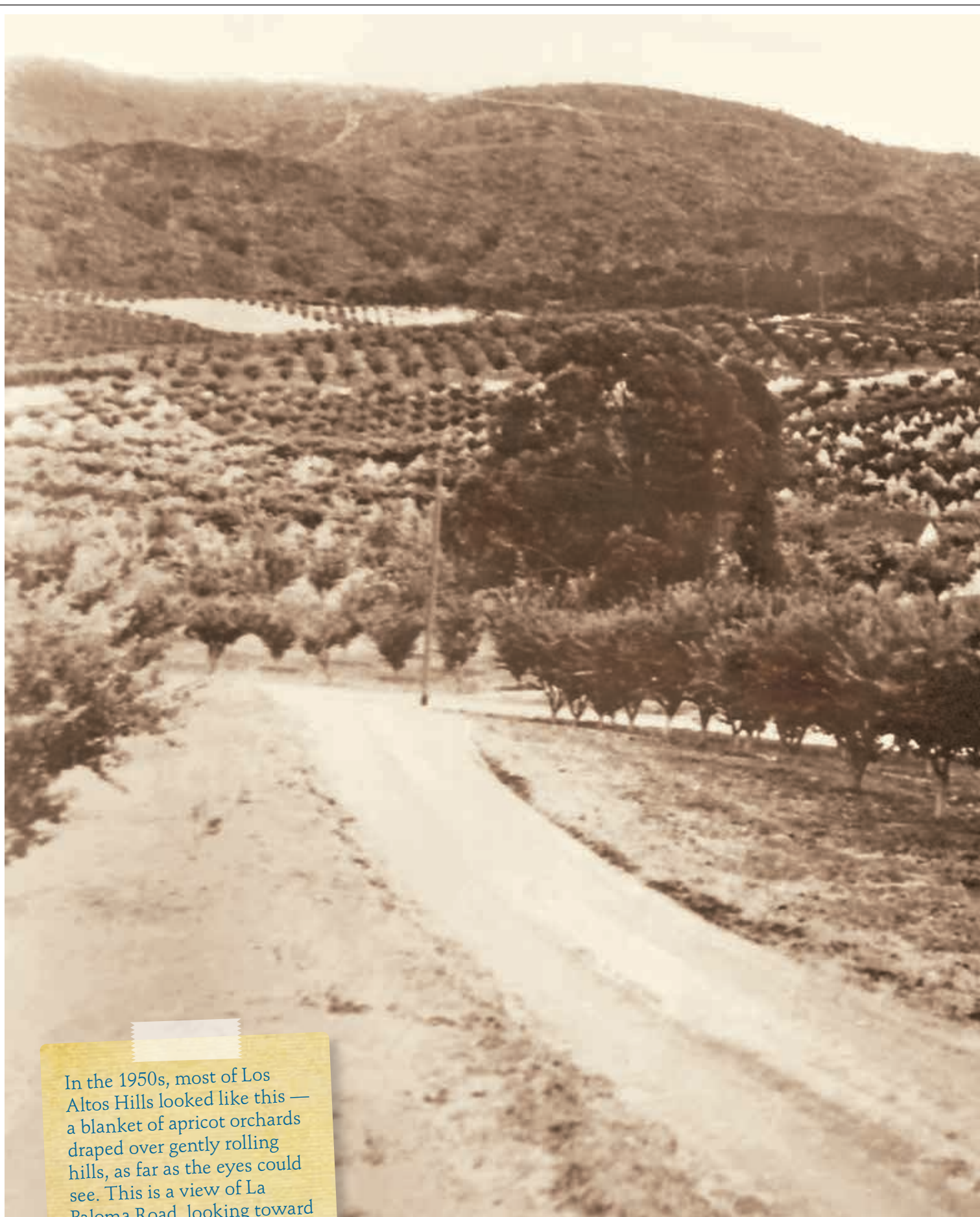


union workers stage the largest strike in California history at that time, delaying Martin's shipment of fruit and grain.

With money becoming scarce, Martin begins to lose land to foreclosure. He dies of Tuberculosis on his 36th birthday on Thanksgiving Day, 1901. Rose is left with enormous debt and five children to raise. She establishes a real estate and insurance company in Mountain View to generate income but the

The two Taaffe brothers start a construction company and life on the ranch seems to be going well until another tragedy occurs.

The family home burns to the ground in front of Rose's eyes. Then, she loses the ranch in foreclosure during The Great Depression. Ironically, a short time later, Rose finds a long-lost bank book for an account that has been accruing interest since 1901. The account belonged to Martin's uncle, who named



In the 1950s, most of Los Altos Hills looked like this — a blanket of apricot orchards draped over gently rolling hills, as far as the eyes could see. This is a view of La Paloma Road, looking toward Purissima Road.



# Westwind Barn

The colorful history of Westwind Barn dates back to the mid-1940s when, after purchasing some 30 acres between Altamont Road and Central Drive, Frank Ellithorpe built a six-stall barn for Morgan and Arabian horses. The original six-stall barn resembled the gambrel-roofed barns found in New England. Gambrel-roofed barns, with two slopes on each side, allow more hay storage area under the roof than a gabled-roof design. Ellithorpe sold the land in 1965 to Robert D. Clement, who added 17 stalls, a tack room and a riding arena.

The property was sold in 1971 to the Countess Margit Besseney as a California extension of her Montana stud farm, where she raised Hungarian thoroughbred horses. The Countess, whose late husband was Hungarian ambassador to the United States, met the well-known horsewoman Linda Tellington-Jones in Badger, Cal. Besseney and Tellington-Jones moved the renowned

Pacific Coast School of Horsemanship from Badger to Los Altos Hills, combining the training of Hungarian horses with a general equine education. Under Tellington-Jones' management and Jim Forderer's instruction, the Pacific Coast School grew, drawing students from all over the country and Europe.

The Countess added a third wing and other elegant touches to the barn, including







the ornate double oak door entry (carved in Mexico) and the elaborate spiral stairway (imported from France). A full-sized dressage ring was built and a difficult cross-country course was added to the growing complex.

In 1975, Los Altos Hills acquired a portion of the property for \$25,000, and Countess Besseney bequeathed the town the remaining 13-1/2 acres of land and the 24,000-square-foot barn. After more than a year discussing the best use of the barn, the

town council approved a proposal presented by Friends of Westwind to lease the barn as a cooperative facility, leading to the formation in May 1977 of Friends of Westwind, Inc.

A therapeutic horse-riding program for physically handicapped children was established in 1978. Westwind 4-H Riding for the Handicapped has served hundreds of children since its founding in October 1978. Thousands of volunteers have donated countless hours, many of them high school students fulfilling community service

Barn serve "the broader community."

Westwind Community Barn is also home to the Pacific Ridge Chapter of the United States Pony Club. Many Los Altos Hills youngsters have been given the opportunity through the Pony Club to learn good horsemanship, team skills and leadership. The rigorous national program has spawned many members of the U.S. Olympic Equestrian Team.

In 2000, the Los Altos Hills Parks and Recreation Program established horse-related activities at Westwind Barn, including classes in horse management, a summer riding camp and a year-round riding program.

After 30 years of operation by the Friends of Westwind, the town in 2008 took over the management of its landmark equestrian facility. A number of improvements were made to address safety issues, landscape screening to create a more inviting entrance to the Barn, and new organizational



requirements.

The establishment of a riding program for disabled children was created in response to the council's concern that the Westwind Community

measures were put in place.

While the Westwind 4-H Riding Program for disabled children continued to flourish — offering its program to children ages 5 to 18 — the year-round riding program for the public at large (operated through the Los Altos Hills Parks and Recreation Department) expanded its programs, involving more and more children and families in the local area.

Soon after the town took over the running of the Barn from Friends of Westwind, the need became apparent to bring the Barn and its foundation up to modern structural standards. After completion of the seismic retrofit, the town began to consider different operating models. In 2014 the Town changed from managing the Barn itself to having it run under

a concessionaire model operated by an independent professional.

In 2014, Torie Dye Equestrian was selected by the Town Council to operate Westwind as a Community Barn that would continue its public riding program and traditional events — such as the Hoedown, Christmas Barn Lighting, and Earth Day Celebration — while “striving to create a fun, community gathering location in which adults and children from Los Altos Hills and surrounding communities can find opportunities to safely connect around horses and nature.”



Today Westwind Community Barn is a thriving enterprise that fulfills the dreams of its founders – to be a focal point for the entire town in one of the most beautiful settings in the Bay Area.

*Nancy Couperus was a prominent activist in the campaign that convinced the town council to retain Westwind Barn as a horse facility when it was first donated to the town. She is a former board member of Friends of Westwind, Inc. In 1978, she founded Westwind 4H Riding for the Handicapped, where she still plays a prominent role.*





# Byrne Preserve

In May 1967, Dr. Albert Byrne, a Los Altos Hills native, donated a 55-acre nature preserve to be used in establishing the Albert Byrne Charitable Foundation of the Nature Conservancy. In appreciation of his generosity, the Nature Conservancy established the Albert Barnitz Byrne Preserve.

Byrne's personal history is both colorful and interesting. The son of pioneer residents of the Los Altos Hills area, Byrne left home as a young man to mine silver in Nevada and later to do surveying in Oregon. In his 30s, he attended college and became a doctor. After practicing as a physician for a time, he volunteered for service in the Republican Army during the Spanish Civil War. When he returned to the United States, he served for many years as a



doctor on Indian reservations before he retired in Texas.

In January 1968 the Town of Los Altos Hills agreed to the purchase of the land subject to the stipulation of Nature Conservancy that it remain in its natural state.

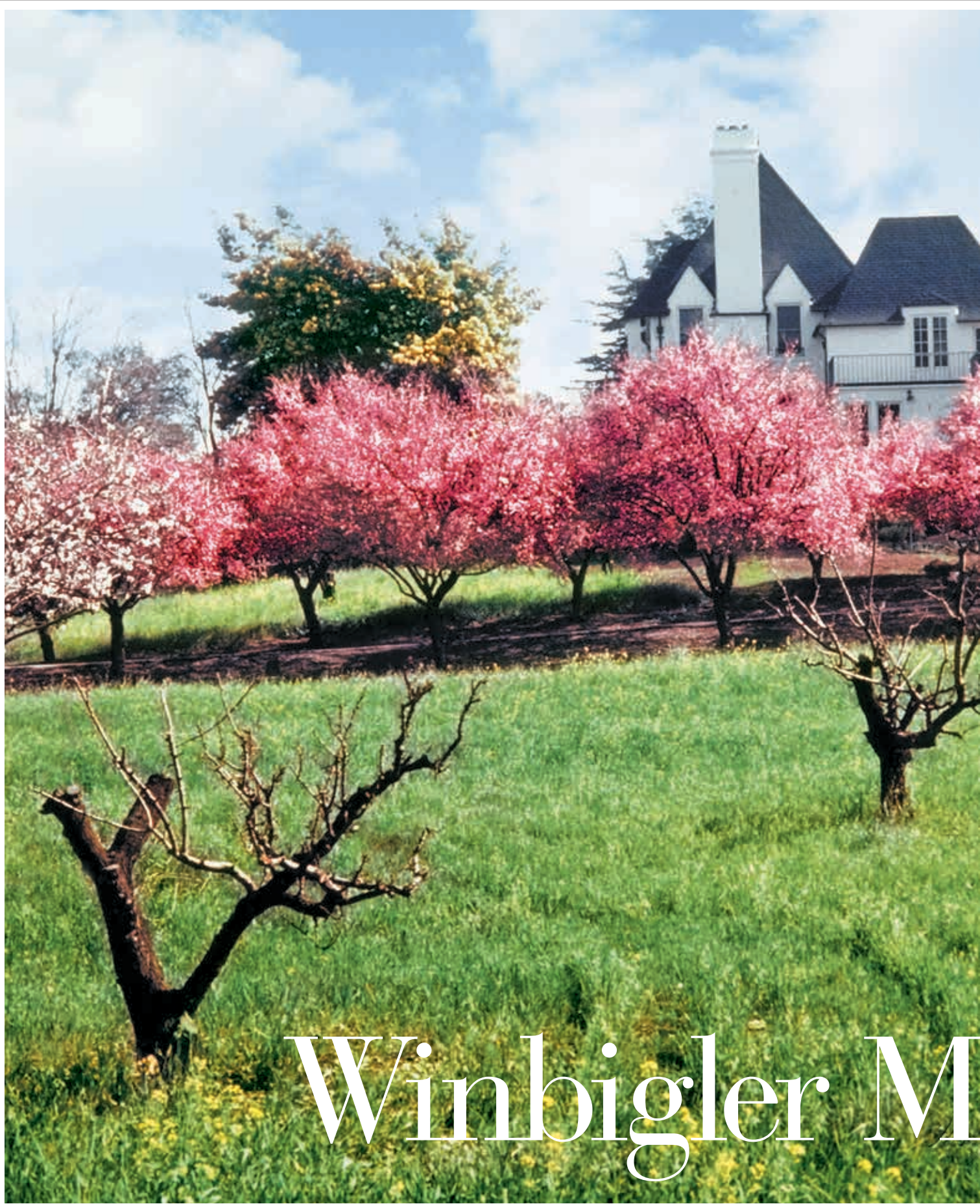
One of the conditions of approval was the agreement by the town that it would provide a connecting corridor linking it with Duveneck's Hidden Villa Ranch and its associated open space. Through the efforts of local residents, a 21-acre corridor was purchased that fulfilled this requirement.

Commenting on the acquisition of the corridor, renowned conservationist

and author Wallace Stegner said, "This corridor will be of inestimable value to the whole community, for it will provide open space, erosion control, walking and horse trails and that intangible but indispensable benefit we call 'visual amenity' — the pure pleasure of seen beauty."

The Byrne Preserve open space is available for grazing of a limited number of horses on a year-round basis. Together with neighboring Westwind Barn, it offers the community — strollers, serious hikers, joggers or merely those seeking a moment of solitude in a pastoral setting — a welcome refuge from the hectic pressures of Silicon Valley.





Winbigler M



**T**he original Los Altos Hills was a farm and orchard community with each farm consisting of many acres of land and a manor house.

The manor houses ranged from simple but sturdy (often adobe) farmhouses to true manor homes, such as the Winbigler manor. The Winbigler manor, a beautiful French chateau-style estate, was located at the corner of Fremont Road and Campo Vista Drive, and has a history that mirrors the town's history and culture.

Early records show the current seven-acre property was originally a part of the Rancho La Purísima Concepción land grant. The land passed through many hands until William Cranston, a prominent Los Altos realtor, bought the 20-acre parcel in 1914. The property included an old shingled farmhouse and a conspicuous red barn and was collectively known as the red barn house. The Cranstons moved in with their baby, Alan, and his sister Eleanor. Future U.S. Senator Alan Cranston spent the first eight years of his life in the red barn house.

In 1922, the Cranstons sold the property to Dr. C.C. Crane, who demolished the old farmhouse and built the French chateau. The Winbiglers purchased the home from Dr. Crane in 1946. Dr. Donald Winbigler was dean of students at Stanford University. His wife, Mary Elizabeth, was a classical Spanish dancer who studied in Spain and toured America professionally as Marie Isabel before retiring to the bucolic life of Los Altos Hills. The Winbiglers lived in the house for more than 50 years.

The Winbigler property, resplendent in apricot and plum blossoms each spring, became a popular venue for local artists — it was common to find four or five artists painting the scene on a sunny spring weekend.

In the 1960s, one of the Winbiglers' apricot trees next to Fremont Road died and shed most of its branches, leaving only a bowed trunk and a stubble of twigs that resembled a reindeer. Mary Elizabeth and nearby neighbors decorated the tree, affectionately known as Rudolph, for seasonal occasions from Christmas to Saint Patrick's Day to Thanksgiving.

The house was sold in 2002 to a private party. That same year, the manor was razed without town approval.

*Jim Steiner (1926-2010) was an active member of the community, named Volunteer of the Year in 2008.*





# Pathways

**P**athways are a valuable feature of our community. Long-time residents will tell you that though there are fewer people on horses, the paths themselves are getting more use than ever. Paths were fundamental to the vision of the town's founding residents, and they remain on the agenda as new neighborhoods are added to the town's boundaries.

In the 1950s, residents were alarmed by the rapid urbanization of neighboring communities and the threat such development posed to the rural character of what became Los Altos Hills. The founders designed a system of roads with multiple cul-de-sacs to minimize the intrusion of cars, maintain privacy and conform to the hilly, wooded terrain. Integral to this plan was the system of pathways, roadside and off-road, which provided safety for residents walking along



the narrow roads and vital connections between neighborhoods.

Visionaries such as Artemis Ginzton, Irma Goldsmith and Bob and Mary Stutz helped formulate the regulations. Through the years, the Pathway Element of the

General Plan has been updated and refined, and a major update of the maps is underway. Yet the original principles supporting the pathway system remain constant.

The first goal of the Pathway Element states: All residents of the town shall have immediate

access adjacent to or across the street from their residence to a pathway or pathways, for safe and convenient pedestrian and other non-vehicular travel along town roads and to schools and community facilities, and for the recreational enjoyment of the natural amenities of the community. Another important function of paths is included in the second goal: Pathways shall also serve to provide access to and from neighborhoods in the event of an emergency.

Although the pathways have been envisioned as a complete system, the “system” will always be a work in progress. Easements for the paths are obtained incrementally at the time of subdivision or site development. For this reason, years may pass before all the segments for a path are secured. Additional time may pass before a path is constructed over the easements. Paths along roads are typically located within or adjacent to the road right-of-



way. Off-road paths generally follow property lines, connecting neighborhoods for the safety and enjoyment of residents. Whether roadside or off-road, all paths receive multiple layers of review before they are built. The process involves town planning staff, the Pathways Committee, the Planning Commission and the City Council. This public process allows residents multiple opportunities to participate.

The town pathway system provides a vital service by giving us a low-cost, accessible way to connect with the outdoors. The pathways contribute to our town's open, rural character and provide all of us with an escape from the motorized, electronic focus of our lives. Pathways are a gift we care for and expand on for future generations.

*Ann Duwe is chair of the Pathways Committee.*



# Mayors

On the rainy night of Tuesday, January 10, 1956, the votes were cast and the polls closed at 7:00 p.m. By a close vote of 424 yes to 339 no votes the Town of Los Altos Hills emerged as Santa Clara County's 14th city. In the town of 2,500, 65 percent of 1,200 total registered voters had cast their ballots.



*When the town was incorporated, the old Purissima School served as a makeshift town hall (see opposite page, bottom). The original single-building school was built in 1901 for \$1,051. It was sold in the mid-1960s and renovated to become the Little Chapel in the Hills. It is now known as St. Luke's Chapel in the Hills.*

State Supreme Court Justice John Shenk officiated at the swearing-in ceremony of the first Town Council, and the official date of the Town's incorporation became January 27, 1956.

The first Town Council (shown on opposite page, top) consisted of Sidney W. Treat, retired executive and teacher, first officiating Mayor; T. A. Dungan, Bechtel Corporation chemical engineer, deputy Mayor; C. Easton Rothwell, director of the Stanford University Hoover Institute and former Secretary-General of the U.S. delegation to the United Nations; Leighton M. Bledsoe, attorney; and Arthur E. Fowle, philanthropist, replaced by son John "Jack" Fowle.



Arthur Fowle, at age 85, polled the highest number of votes in the race and was slated to become the Town's first mayor. When he suffered a heart attack and had to resign on the advice of his physician, he

appointed his son, John, to take his place on the council.

The Town Council immediately voted to continue existing county services, with the exception of the County Planning Commission. The original Town Planning Commission consisted of Richard S. Bullis, Richard S. Dawson, Raymond O. Hoefler, Proctor Melquist, Thomas Sherlock, William Simrell, Jr., and James Stedman.





## MAYOR

## TERM OF OFFICE

Sidney W. Treat	1956-58
John M. Fowle	1958-61
William B. Clayton	1961-65
Albert T. Henley	1965-68
William Ross Aiken	1968-70
Walter A. Benson	1970-72
Leslie Helgesson	1972-74
Stanley Grabowski	1974-76
Robert Cheney	1976-77
Keith Brown	1977-78
Lucille T. Hillestad	1978-79
Thomas P. McReynolds	1979-80
James C. Nystrom	1980-81
David G. Proft	1981-82
William A. Perkins	1982-83
Mary van Tamelen	1983-84
Andrew Allison	1984-85
Louise Dronkert	1985-86
Mary van Tamelen	1986-87
Barbara Tryon	1987-88
Bob Johnson	1988-89
Toni Casey	1989-90
William Siegel	1990-91
Sid Hubbard	1991-92
Barbara Tryon	1992-93
Bob Johnson	1993-94
Elayne Dauber	1994-95
William Siegel	1995-96
Sid Hubbard	1996-97
Toni Casey	1997-98
Bob Johnson	1998-99
Elayne Dauber	1999-00
Steve Finn	2000-01
Toni Casey	2001-02
Bob Fenwick	2002-03
Emily Cheng	2003-04
Mike O'Malley	2004-05
Breene Kerr	2005-06
Dean Warshawsky	2006-07
Craig A. T. Jones	2007-08
Jean Mordo	2008-09
Dean Warshawsky	2009-10
Breene Kerr	2010-10
Ginger Summit	2010-11
Rich Larsen	2012
Gary Waldek	2013
John Radford	2014
Courtenay C. Corrigan	2015
John Harpootlian	2016



## Mary van Tamelen

1983-84, 1986-87

### MAJOR ISSUES

When I was elected, our first and foremost issue was setting up staff. Our manager resigned immediately (we were elected to see that he did), and so the number one task was acquiring a new one. None of us knew much about hiring city managers, much less directing them. Our initial choice proved inappropriate, and so in my second year, when I served my first term as mayor, we had to correct our mistake: fire and rehire. Plus there were several other staff changes, many questionable actions and tense relationships to be corrected.

The top issue in town was — and always will be residential development. Houses were increasing in size at that time, and it took many planning and study sessions to set up standards that would preserve the town's rural character while allowing adequate land use. Our town had been founded on environmental principles spelled out in the early Green Sheets. I saw my job as not only welcoming new residents, but also preserving the setting for the original residents.

### PROUDEST ACCOMPLISHMENT

I'm proudest of the work I did on the ordinances, making them fair and reasonable. Also, when I was elected, Los Altos and Los Altos Hills had a terrible relationship. Our managers were not speaking to each other and the councils never approached each other. When Jane Reed was mayor of Los Altos and I was mayor of Los Altos Hills, we decided to change that. One of our ideas was the Joint Awards luncheon in which unsung volunteers in both towns would be honored. We set the program up — and it is still going strong; the program celebrated the work of volunteers for the 30th consecutive year.



### MOST ENDURING LESSON

The enduring lesson I learned from being mayor is to listen — to seek out opinions and really listen to them.



**Bob Johnson**  
1988-89, 1993-94,  
1998-99

#### MAJOR ISSUES

While running for council the first time in 1988, I vigorously opposed Measure B, which would have abolished the one acre minimum. I was elected, immediately appointed mayor, and the one acre minimum survived.

In the middle of my 12 years on council, we persuaded Sacramento to allow us to count secondary dwellings to satisfy the state's mandatory affordable housing quota, which would otherwise have been subject to heavy fines. The town now has many secondary dwellings.

During my third term as mayor in January 1999, I had the swing vote on a sharply divided council, and I was able to force through a staff recommendation for what became known as the Fast Track system, which allowed staff to bypass the Planning Commission. Today a majority of building applications are fast tracked, saving applicants thousands of dollars, and much delay, and inconvenience.

#### PROUDEST ACCOMPLISHMENT

I am proudest of the implementation of Fast Track legislation, even though the basic idea came from Planning Director Curtis Williams.

#### MOST ENDURING LESSON

The most enduring personal insight gained was the enormous value of having warring neighbors compromise over divisive issues. This, I believe, is one of the most important functions of successful local government.



**Sid Hubbard**  
1991-92,  
1996-97

#### MAJOR ISSUES

During my term in 1991-92, one of the major issues was overseeing the development of the 360 acre Neary Quarry subdivision (Quarry Hills) which involved implementing the voter's desire (passage of Measure B) to minimize ridge line development and maintain and expand the trail system in the area. Mid-Peninsula Open Space District and the owner (John Vidovich) negotiated the transfer of 280 acres to the District.

#### PROUDEST ACCOMPLISHMENT

I helped create an atmosphere of trust and cooperation between the citizens, staff and Council. Clear guidelines were established which clarified the Town's building ordinances which in turn expedited project approvals.

Another accomplishment was organizing a special meeting to address the lessons learned from the 1991 Oakland fire. A special council meeting was held with representative from the fire department, sheriff's office, and others. Many improvements were implemented as a result of this meeting to help the Town respond better to a fire emergency.

#### MOST ENDURING LESSON

It was important to create an atmosphere of trust and goodwill by being supportive of our staff and by truly listening to and respecting our citizens.

# Street Names

Street names reveal a great deal about a town's history. In Los Altos Hills, the name of many streets date back to the names of early settlers. Other names were chosen by land developers (in some cases using the names of their wives, children, or relatives) while a few were named in a more whimsical vein. Regardless of how the streets were named, their stories paint a colorful portrait of a small rural town as it grew over the decades.

## **Adobe Creek Lodge Road**

The road takes its name from the recreational property that formerly surrounded it. It was forced out of business by the town's prohibition on commercial enterprises. The name Adobe Creek came from the north flowing stream that originated on Black Mountain and flowed through Los Altos Hills, Los Altos, and Palo Alto.

## **Alexander Place**

Named after Alexander Berger.

## **Altamont Road**

Originally Elizabeth Avenue. The name was changed by town council in 1962.

## **Alto Verde Lane**

Spanish for "Green Hill." The street was named by town council on October 6, 1958.

## **Arastradero Road**

This road was originally a cattle trail. It is the Spanish word for a road used for logging or pulling a dead bull with a rope.



## **Aric Lane**

Named after the son, Aric, of Maurice Johnson, a subdivision builder.

## **Avila Court**

Named for the property owner who owned a cattle ranch and kept many horses on the property.

## **Baker Lane**

Named by the owner, Mr. Baker. He gave part of the property to his daughter, Mrs. Anderson, who lived at the top of the street.

## **Baleri Ranch Road**

Named for early town residents.

## **Beatrice Lane**

Named for Beatrice Fretz, wife of Paul Fretz, a real estate agent who with Mr. Cicerone, subdivided the seven acres around the Laura Bergner house.

## **Beaver Lane**

Named for Dr. Beaver, a general practitioner who lived in the area. The property was originally an orchard and grazing field. The property was divided and the stable was remodeled into two houses. Foreman's house was torn down. Dr. Beaver was on the freeway committee for the town.

## **Bentley Court**

Named for Professor Rufus Clarence Bentley and his wife Ellen Hart Bentley. They bought a ten-acre apricot ranch at the south east corner of Burke Avenue and Fremont Road in the early 1930s after his retirement from Stanford University. The ranch was sold around 1945 and Bentley Court was subsequently subdivided.

### **Black Mountain Road**

Originally named Yuba Avenue and a portion of Elena Avenue. The name was changed by town council in 1962.

### **Bledsoe Court**

Named for a councilmember soon after the incorporation of the town in 1956.

### **Briones Court and Way**

Named after Juana Briones who purchased the Rancho, La Purisima Concepcion, in 1844. It later became a major portion of Los Altos Hills, stretching from Adobe Creek to Arastradero Creek.

### **Burke Road and Lane**

Named for Jeret T. Burke who owned 60 acres in 1930.

### **Canario Way**

Originally Arroyo Way. The name was changed by town council on October 6, 1958.

### **Carrington Circle**

Alma Carrington Taylor requested the name in honor of her parents who bought 6.5 acres in 1920. The tract was subdivided by Bob Owen.

### **Christopher Lane**

Named for Phyllis White's son Christopher. White lived on Jabil Lane in Los Altos Hills.

### **Cicerone Lane**

Named for the family that initially developed the subdivision.

### **Concepcion Road**

Named after Rancho La Purísima Concepción the name of the rancho that Juana Briones purchased from Jose Gorgonio in 1844. Translated from Spanish, it means "the land of the immaculate conception," based on the teaching of the Catholic Church. Specifically it refers to the conception of Mary who is born free of original sin. The ranch was named by the Catholic priests who ran Mission Santa Clara de Asis. In 1840 Governor Juan Alvarado granted the land to Ohlone Indians Jose Gorgonio and his son, Ramon.



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